



How to Start a Farmers Market

Denny N. Johnson
Agricultural Marketing Specialist

Marketing Services Program
Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Definition and Benefits of a Farmers Market



Definition: A common facility or area where several farmers or growers gather on a regular, recurring basis to sell a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and other locally-grown farm products directly to consumers.

Benefits for Small/Medium-Sized Farm Operators:

Direct access to consumers at farmers markets provides an important supplemental source of farm income for many growers.

Benefits for Consumers: Farmers markets allow consumers to have access to locally grown, farm-fresh produce and the opportunity to personally interact with the farmer who grows the produce.

Benefits for the Community: Many urban communities where fresh, nutritious foods are scarce gain easier access to food through farmers market operations.

Goals of Starting a Farmers Market

1. Create a Sponsoring Organization
2. Identify and Recruit Farmers
3. Establish By-Laws
4. Adopt and Enforce Rules and Regulations
5. Create a Budget
6. Determine Fee Structure
7. Identify a Location
8. Identify a Market Manager



Goal #1: Create a Sponsoring Organization

Assemble a group of dedicated stakeholders to:

- Discuss objectives and goals of the planned farmers market facility
- Establish a governing body
- Develop by-laws and operating rules and regulations
- Create a mission statement
- Set realistic goals



Goal #1: Create a Sponsoring Organization

Mission Statement and Goal Setting



Mission statement should:

- Provide an impression of the direction the market is heading
- Be concise

Goal setting should describe:

- Expected achievements
- Items to be marketed
- Who will be involved
- Expected earnings

Goals can be prioritized using timeframes.

Short-term = 1-5 years

Intermediate = 5-10 years

Long-term = 10+ years

Example of Mission Statement: Dane County Farmers Market in Madison, Wisconsin

Mission Statement



The Dane County Farmers' Market, Inc. is an organization founded to pursue the following goals:

- To give growers and producers of Wisconsin agricultural commodities and other farm-related products alternative marketing opportunities.
- To promote the sale of Wisconsin-grown farm products.
- To improve the variety, freshness, taste and nutritional value of produce available in the Madison area.
- To provide an opportunity for farmers and people from urban communities to deal directly with each other rather than through third parties, and to thereby get to know and learn from one another.
- To provide an educational forum for consumers to learn the uses and benefits of quality, locally grown or prepared food products.
- To provide educational opportunities for producers to test and refine their products and marketing skills.
- To enhance the quality of life in the Greater Madison area by providing a community activity which fosters social gathering and interaction.
- To preserve Wisconsin's unique agricultural heritage and the historical role which farmers' markets have played in it.

Goal #2: Identify and Recruit Farmers



Sources for finding farmers/participants:

- County extension agents
 - <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/>
- Cooperative Extension departments at local land-grant universities
 - http://www.csrees.usda.gov/qlinks/partners/state_partners.html
- Agricultural trade associations

Goal #3: Establish By-laws



What is the purpose of By-laws?

- Describe and define responsibilities of directors and officers
- Define the purpose, locations, and hours of operation of the market
- Define membership, dues, and fees
- Describe election procedures
- Define amendment process

Goal #4: Adopt and Enforce Rules and Regulations



Questions/concerns that may arise regarding specific guidelines include:

- Should sales at the market be limited to fresh fruits and vegetables or should processed and dried goods, or farm related crafts, be allowed?
- How many participants can the market accommodate or is there ample space for all of those that desire to participate?
- Are licenses and permits required to sell certain commodities at the market, such as nursery licenses for all potted plants and cut flowers, or processed foods certifications for any value-added vegetable or fruit items?
- Will the geographic region that the market draws on for suppliers be restricted in any way (e.g., by number of participating counties)?
- If a market is located on city property, will the city allow hot food items or “closed alcoholic containers” to be sold on the market?

Goal #4: Adopt and Enforce Rules and Regulations



Available Forums @ www.nafdma.org/fmc

- [Ag Tourism](#) Posts: **42** Last Post: **12-03-05 09:53**
Post questions and answers specific to tourism and on-farm entertainment.
- [Ask NAFDMA's Office](#) Posts: **24** Last Post: **01-31-05 11:40**
Post questions and comments for your professional management office. We will answer them.
- [Business Management](#) Posts: **11** Last Post: **11-02-05 10:06**
Post questions and answers specific to business management and practices.
- [Classified Ads](#) Posts: **66** Last Post: **11-25-05 05:00**
Are you looking to buy or sell? Post your announcement here.
- [Events and Activities](#) Posts: **12** Last Post: **08-23-05 11:56**
Post questions and answers specific to on-farm events, activities and School Tours
- [Farmers' Markets](#) Posts: **10** Last Post: **11-28-05 08:46**
For managers and farmers. Post questions and answers specific to farmers' markets.
- [General Discussions](#) Posts: **37** Last Post: **11-11-05 12:35**
Doesn't fit in any other category? Post questions and answers here.
- [Insurance](#) Posts: **17** Last Post: **11-10-05 12:22**
Post questions and answers specific to Insurance issues.
- [Retail Sales](#) Posts: **34** Last Post: **11-21-05 09:19**
Post questions and answers specific to selling your products.
- [What's Happening at NAFDMA Farms](#) Posts: **5** Last Post: **11-21-05 09:40**
Is something new, exciting, or newsworthy happening on your farm? Share it with other members.
- [Zoning](#) Posts: **3** Last Post: **06-15-05 13:00**
Post questions and answers specific to Zoning issues.

Goal #5: Create a Budget

Annual Expenses Associated with Maintaining a Farmers Market include:

- Insurance
- Permits
- Outside assistance and funding



Goal #6: Determine Fee Structure

- Fees collected from participating vendors are a primary source of income for farmers markets.
- Fees determine the market manager's salary, market advertising, and amount of maintenance and improvements to the market site.
- Fees should be based on profitability
- Fees may be based on a percentage of daily gross sales or on a seasonal/annual basis.



Goal #6: Determine Fee Structure

Stakeholders Can Contribute to Success



Stakeholders can also contribute to the establishment of a successful farmers market if they:

- “Do their homework” and thoroughly evaluate local market conditions
- Leverage available resources in the community
- Hire strong, capable management
- Set appropriate market standards
- Develop a realistic budget and fee structure
- Arrange for a reliable and steady supply of quality farm product
- Pay sufficient attention to market publicity and community relations
- Tap into city/county resources that deal with local health coding, local ordinances and laws, permits, etc., solid waste disposal, and connection to utilities
- Find inexpensive public space

Goal #7: Identify a Location



Examples of good locations include:

- Shopping centers and malls
- Outdoor spaces or parking lots affiliated with religious institutions
- State and Federal building parking lots (for weekend markets)
- Downtown “plaza” areas
- Public parks
- Public square
- Blocked off street connected to local businesses

Goal #7: Identify a Location

Stakeholders Can Contribute to Success



The Jennings County Farmers Market, in North Vernon, Indiana, provides a classic example of a market that utilizes **inexpensive public space** in a good location.

Goal #7: Identify a Location

Determining a Successful Market Location

A successful farmers market location should offer:

- Access to public restrooms
- Public telephones
- Customer service booth



Goal #8: Identify a Market Manager



A market manager is responsible for:

- Acting as main contact person for market
- Overseeing day-to-day market operations
- Collecting user fees
- Obtaining proper permits and insurance for market
- Enforcing rules and regulations
- Recruiting vendors
- Controlling vendor and product mix
- Handling complaints and disputes
- Working with market's board of directors
- Establishing strong community contacts

MSB Contact Information



Marketing Services Branch

USDA/AMS/TM/MSB
1400 Independence Ave., SW.
Room 2646 - S, Stop 0269
Washington, DC 20250-0269
Phone: (202) 720-8317
Fax: (202) 690-0031

For more information on MSB activities, please contact:

Errol R. Bragg
Associate Deputy Administrator
(202) 720-8317

errol.bragg@usda.gov

www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/MSB/index.htm